

CAMERON

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION. PROFILE RE: WOMEN'S BUILDING, 1984 [4p] 1/3

Profile---Barbara M. Cameron

--I understand that you've been very busy lately, working, being involved in politics and raising a child?

Yes, I'm employed as a Data Processing Manager. I'm an officer of the Alice B. Toklas Lesbian/Gay Democratic Club, serve on the Lesbian/Gay Advisory Committee to the Human Rights Commission, member of the Board of Directors of the Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day Committee and am Co-Chair of the Friends of Pat Norman for Supervisor Campaign. Recently I've been appointed by the Mayor to the Citizens's Committee for Community Development and I've accepted an invitation by United Way to serve on their special needs funds committee. My lover Linda and I are co-parenting our three year old son, Rhys and are taking care of our four cats and one dog.

--How did you get into politics?

I believe that my political activism is largely due to the fact that I am an Indian. That I grew up on a reservation and I was raised by my grandparents. The combination has given me a perspective of the U.S. government which allows me to see it's fallacies. I've never been the kind of person who goes along in the world never questioning, never wondering why certain things are the way they are. In addition, I'm a former Catholic and their attitudes certain fueled my dislike of uniformity.

I was involved with the American Indian Movement for several years and decided for many reasons, some deeply personal, to take a leave from political work in the Indian community. But whatever I do or wherever I go, I am absolutely certain and secure in my identity and foundation as an Indian. My grandparents helped provide that for me.

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--What's it like being a lesbian in the American Indian community and being an Indian in the Lesbian/Gay community?

I find it most often to be, as I'm getting older, like a graceful but studied ballet. There are insensitive and ignorant persons in both communities. During the time that I worked primarily in the Indian community, I co-founded a group for gay Indians. There are many heterosexual Indians, as there are many heterosexuals in the United States, who are anti-gay. Fear and prejudice crosses all our boundaries whether they be class, race or gender.

In the Lesbian/Gay community, I have been the only Indian political activist for many years. I bring up issues important to Indians so that others will learn and perhaps begin to get a different understanding of this country they are living in. People rarely ask me if I'm an Indian. Usually they ask if I'm from Central America, South America or Spain. I say, "No, I'm really from here!" I'm constantly amazed that in these high techno times no matter what race, class or country we humans are still largely barbaric in our dealings with one another.

--I'm sure you have some stories to tell being an Indian lesbian and raising a young boy?

Well, Rhys is very young. He's only three years old. But he is aware of the cowboys and Indians syndrome every youngster goes through in the United States. Sometimes when we watch television, I talk with him about it. I tell him "I'm an Indian" and he says "No you're not!" and I say "Yes, I am." and then after a while he comes out with "I'm an Indian too. Our cats are Indians, our dog is Indian....."

I'm suprised to be involved with a child. I had been around only one age group

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for a long time. I believe it is limiting one's perspective to be involved with only one age group.

--How did you first hear about the Women's building?

I first heard about the Women's Building through Jean (Crosby) and Roma (Guy) in the Lesbian Caucus. From 1980-81, I was a member of the Building's Community Advisory Board. I'm glad there's a physical location for women to meet. If I were to be involved again, more intimately, with the Building I would like to see the development of the auditorium into a prime hall for all kinds of performances and events.

--How can the Women's Building influence the community?

The Women's Building can influence the community by promoting issues important to women in a timely manner. And the Women's Building needs to be accessible to many different groups if it's to be an educational tool. It is important for people to mix, to share and to develop new ways of relating. I hope that can be nurtured through the Building. We can not educate by being exclusive or by being intimidating. It is exciting to know of all the different groups meeting there and we need more.

--Are there any special projects that you are working on?

Pat Norman's campaign for supervisor is a major priority of mine. The women's community has an opportunity to help elect a strong, concerned and exciting person to the board. It would be tremendous to have a lesbian who has the integrity that Pat has representing the city of San Francisco. And beyond her integrity and humanity, she is qualified to serve in the capacity as a supervisor. I hope the women who take the time to read this interview are registered to vote and will vote for Pat Norman in November. We have six votes for supervisor and one of them must be for Pat. It is critical to our lives

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to vote whether it's for local issues and candidates or national issues and candidates. We cannot ignore mainstream politics. After all, look what it has done to our lives.

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